GOP: Reactions are heated

Continued from A1

who assisted Republican Bob Riley's campaign in 2002 against the Democratic incumbent, said Riley's son, Rob Riley, told her of the offer to close the Justice Department probe of Siegelman.

Rob Riley said her claim was unbelievable.

"If it had happened, we'd have heard about it before now from Don Siegelman," said Rob Riley.

Siegelman, who conceded the narrow loss in November 2002 but continued to be investigated and prosecuted by the Justice Department, has never made any comment indicating such an offer was made.

Siegelman attorney David McDonald declined to comment Wednesday on the Simpson claim.

"I don't have any comment on that issue. The only thing I want to comment on is that we have an innocent man sitting in prison and I hope the 11th Circuit will let him out," McDonald said.

A 143-page transcript of Simpson's sworn testimony to House Judiciary Committee investigators on Sept. 14 also includes more details of her allegation that White House political adviser Karl Rove manipulated the Justice Department probe of Siegelman at the behest of Bill Canary, a GOP operative whose wife is the U.S. attorney in Montgomery.

"What I understood, or what I believed Mr. Canary to be saying, was that he had had this ongoing conversation with Karl Rove about Don Siegelman, and that Don Siegelman was a thorn to them and basically he was going to — he had been talking with Rove. Rove had been talking with the Justice Department, and they were pursuing Don Siegelman as a result of Rove talking to the Justice Department at the request of Bill Canary," Simpson says in the transcript.

Career federal prosecutors who handled the Siegelman prosecution have repeatedly denied any political tampering in their case. The U.S. attorney, Leura Canary, recused herself from the investigation in May 2002, months before the alleged deal described by Simpson.

Bill Canary also has disputed the Simpson account.

According to Simpson, Rob Riley told her that Republican attorney Terry Butts told Siegelman the federal investigation would "go away" if he dropped his challenge. She said Siegelman was also told that if he quit the race, pictures showing a Siegelman supporter putting up Bob Riley campaign signs outside a Jackson County Ku Klux Klan rally would also go away.

"And in that conversation basically, Mr. Siegelman had been offered to go ahead and concede, that the pictures would not come out and that they would not further prosecute him with the justice department," Simpson told the committee attorneys, according to the transcript.

She said Riley also implied that Siegelman was to also drop out of Alabama politics.

Rob Riley vehemently denied making the statements to Simpson.

"Jill Simpson is making up her story as she goes along. It becomes more ridiculous and more unbelievable every time she speaks," said Riley.

Butts, a former Alabama Supreme Court justice, denied that he had a conversation with Siegelman about dropping his challenge.

"I would have had no authority of any kind to ever even make an offer. It just didn't happen. Absolutely not," Butts said.

In the transcript, Simpson said Rob Riley once assured her that U.S. District Judge Mark Fuller, a Republican appointee and the trial judge in Siegelman's case, would make sure Siegelman was found guilty.

Siegelman and former HealthSouth CEO Richard Scrushy were convicted last year of bribery and other charges in a federal government corruption case. Both men are currently serving federal prison sentences. Fuller ordered them sent to prison immediately when they were sentenced to prison in June.

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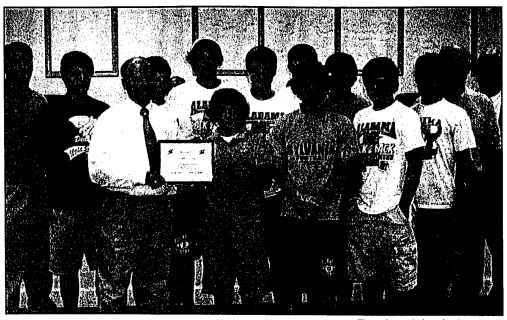

Times-Journal photo by Greg Purvis

The DeKalb 14-year-old Dixie Boys baseball team was recognized recently by the DeKalb County Board of Education for making the World Series during the summer. Team members include Jacob Croft, Colt Buttram, John Shrader, Preston Poe, Luke McGee, Phillip Brown, Brett Loudermilk, Trey Gibson, Tyler Dickerson, Justin Keef and Colby Williams. The coaches are Scott Smith, Anthony Poe and Roger Brown. Team members are pictured with board member Mark Richards (front row, first from left) and superintendent Charles Warren (back row, first from right).

Schools: Construction goes on in DeKalb

Continued from A1

"These new classrooms are a big thing for Crossville because we have some portable classrooms on the Crossville High School campus," Warren said. "That gets those kids in regular classrooms."

And other than a little landscaping left to do, the project started in April is now complete.

Warren said workers started on the roof of new classrooms, office space and a teacher work area at Geraldine School Wednesday. The $1.1 million project was started in June.

"Hopefully they will have it completed very soon," Warren said.

Warren said he is expecting to see new media centers and more classrooms finished at Ider and Sylvania schools.

At Ider, the $1.5 million project started in June and should be finished by the end of November. Sylvania's $1.1 million project is expected to be complete in January.

"Ider is a little ahead of Sylvania, but Sylvania is rapidly catching up," Warren said.

Bids on a third media center at Plainview Elementary will be opened in two or three weeks, Warren said.

"We plan to break ground on it in the early fall," Warren said.

The new media centers are part of a reading initiative started by the school board.

"This was phase two of our comprehensive reading initiative we started a few years ago," Warren said. "Our feeling is the better we equip readers, the better they will perform in the classroom and the better test scores will be."

Warren said other projects include an addition to the central office, a classroom addition at Ruhama Junior High School and central heating and air conditioning upgrades at Ruhama, Henagar, Plainview, Geraldine and Moon Lake to be done next summer. A $276,000 cafeteria addition at Henagar School was completed last summer.

Warren said the projects were funded through a $5.38 million loan from the state public school fund in 2006. The fund is earmarked for school construction.

"This is state funding we had leveraged a couple of years ago, and these are the projects that came from that money," Warren said.

DeKalb County will also receive $7.25 million for school construction from the state in early 2008. The state Legislature approved the bond money during the last regular session. Plans for that money have not been approved, but a new gym at Valley Head School has been discussed.

Clock:

Continued from A1

clocks as a communal way to tell time, since the cost of timepieces was not within the budget of many citizens.

The clock is engraved with the date 1838 — the year the town was established, Jordan said. It lights up at dusk, so it is visible from a distance.

Jordan said the clock was budgeted during the building and renovation plans, so the costs were figured into the City Hall construction.

The clock was made by Verdin Clock Co. in Cincinnati.

"It's something we can all be proud of," Jordan said. "And you can set your watch to it."

Alert:

Continued from A1

be as gusty. We are just being cautious because it is so dry outside."

The watch is also issued for Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Morgan, Marshall, Jackson and Cullman counties.

"There is always a chance that another red flag warning could be put into effect, but right now we are just looking at a watch.

A forest fire that erupted in a heavily wooded area near Mentone kicked off the fall fire season Oct 2.

"DeKalb County has had more than 50 fires so far this year, with more than 1,700 acres affected." Alabama Forestry Commission spokesperson Coleen Vansant said. "Our spring fire season runs March 1 through May, and our fall season runs Oct. 1 through late November. This year, there hasn't been much of a break between the two — just one long, dangerous season."

A burn ban, issued by ADEM, remains in DeKalb County until Oct. 31.

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